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IV. THE PLACE OF THE KHASI IN THE WORLD.

By

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131 [614] [61] [197] The Khasi country lies in the hills of the province of Assam in North East India. Khasi clans are exogamous and matrilneal, and the Khasis speak a MonKhmer language.

121 In speaking of the place of the Khasi in the world I intend to explain the Khasi's own view of his relation to other peoples of the world.*

• 829 The Khasi is very conscious of his importance. He says a Khasi claims to be the centre of the world. The Khasi has acquired such a feeling of self-importance from his great confidence in himself; and this confidence he has derived from the position in which his relationship-terminology represents him as standing with respect to himself and the world around him. Or, rather, his relationshisp terms and language are an expression of his attitude and notions.

601 The Khasi says—*Ka Kamie* (mother)

U Khun (son) — *Ka Kmie* (mother)

Which is—His mother

Himself (male) — His sister (female)

He calls this the family. Then he says—

Ka Kamie Kha
(Father's mother)

U Kpa Kha (Father, Father's brother) (male) — *Ka Nia Kha* Father Father's sister (female)

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* The writer of th is article is himself a Khasi (Christian).

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the husband. Whichever side is *jem ka rwiang* (*lit.* whose person is less strong, less able to resist the evil) will suffer death. The word *rwiang* means more than literally 'fortune.' The word *rwiang* goes with *rngiew* and the two are coupled together as *ka Rngiew ka Rwiang*. *Rngiew* is the person, the man's 'ama'. *'Rwiang'* is the encircling power produced by that person, hence *jem ka rwiang* means the power encircling the man's person becoming easy of being conquered or subdued. (*Jem* = easy, pliable.)

In a word, the Khasi's idea of himself is that he stands in the middle of the world. We do not find terms in the languages of peoples with the family system to express varieties of relationship to the extent that we have in the Khasi vocabulary. Some of the other languages content themselves with terms for father, mother, uncle, aunt, cousin. They have no words to differentiate the classificatory-descriptive system of terms showing relationship with mother, mother's elder and younger sistere (*mei, mei san, mei nah*); father and his elder and younger brothers (*kpa, kpa san, kap nah*) and father's brother's children (*para kha*), father's mother (*mei kha*), mother's mother (*mei rad,*) wife's brother (*kynum*), husband's brother (*kong*), and so on. We find in the Khasi sociology, departments of social organization indicating the attitude towards life which is peculiar to the Khasi. The terms are not mere names but serve to show well-defined groups based on an idea of their special functions. As Dr. R. R. Marett says, "Exogamy, and everything

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[121] else that we do is instinct with a *plus*; and for the student of religion or of human culture in any of its forms, to account for that *plus* is the sum and substance of his task.....Whereas, then, there is likelihood that any *a posteriori* reason existed for believing that in-breeding makes for sterility, if indeed it be true in fact at all, there might well have been an *a priori* conviction to much the same effect based simply on a fear that to tamper with the fountain-head of human vitality would somehow cause it to dry up." The Khasi stands in the world as exogamous in his rule of life, and he says '*sang bad byrsieh*', that is, endogamy is forbidden and if it should ever be committed it will render life defiled and corrupt. He says this out of the fear of the knowledge that any act of carelessness in the prohibited area of the source of human life and vitality, which is in the Khasi phrase '*long briw*' (*long* is to be or become, *briew* is man, i.e., to be or become man), will make that source of human life to dry up. So he says, 'duh I jaid I khong' (*duh*=is exterminated; *jaid*= kind, species; *khong*=root).

In refutation of such aspersions as that the Khasi has no rules of marriage, I shall quote the most sacred pronouncement the Khasi when two persons, the man and the woman, are initiated into that state. Calling upon the name of God the Khasi says—"*U Lei thaw briew man briw, u' Lei ne ka 'Lei synshar*', (God who creates man and is the source of human life, God who keeps, controls, preserves), "*Hei ko Blei na jrong, Ko*